DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 275 786 UD 025 203

TITLE	Still Waiting for a Sign. A Report on the Montgomery County Board of Education and Montgomery County Public Schools, 1985-1986.
INSTITUTION	Citizen's Minority Relations Monitoring Committee, Rockville, MD.
PUB DATE	86
NOTE	85p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Black Students; Educational Discrimination; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; *Ethnic Discrimination; *Hispanic Americans; Minority Group Children; Student Rights; Suspension; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Placement
IDENTIFIERS	*Montgomery County Public Schools MD

ABSTRACT

In September 1983 the Montgomery County Public Schools began an effort to design and implement a plan which would reduce the disparity in academic accomplishment between its white and minority student. Statistics for the 1985-86 school year demonstrate that the school system still does not provide an equal educational opportunity for all students. The most serious problems are the following: (1) the school system still operates with only token minority representation on the professional staff, although more than one-third of the students are minorities; (2) standardized test scores for Blacks and Hispanics improved in only a few areas and grades, but stagnated or declined in general; (3) minority students are overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in gifted and talented programs; (4) larger proportions of Black students are suspended each year; (5) Hispanic and Black students are disproportionately affected by the rules regarding loss of credit for non-attendance; (6) teacher and administrator attitudes are frequently antagonistic to Black students' attempts to gain more from their school experience. (PS)

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STILL WAITING FOR A SIGN

A Report By The
Citizens' Minority Relations Monitoring Committee

on

The Montgomery County Board of Education

and

Montgomery County Public Schools
1985-1986

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Introduction

Beginning in the Summer of 1983, the Montgomery County Public School system embarked on an effort to improve its effectiveness in teaching Hispanic and Black students. This is not intended to imply that the school system never before made an effort to improve its capacity to educate minority students, but rather that this most recent initiative is in all probability the single most comprehensive and concerted attempt in recent memory, designed to address this persistent problem. Most of the community with an interest in education matters applauded the MCPS plan for minority students. The Citizens' Minority Relations Monitoring Committee (CMRMC) was especially pleased with the school system's announced plan of action.

Although the school system's efforts were titled "Improving Minority Student Achievement," since Hispanic and Black students scored significantly lower on standardized and compentency tests, it was generally understood that the issue was larger than just the discrepancy in test scores. The issue was and still is that of preparing the MCPS system to become equally effective in serving the educational and other developmental needs of all students.

For most of the MCPS system's existence, by law it did not need to be overly concerned about its effectiveness in serving the educational needs of minorities, which could be readily translated to mean Black student. It was acceptable to

minimally provide for their educational development. A dual system, or segregated system was not only acceptable in practice, but was required by law. And the penalty for infringing on the educational "law of the land" could be very severe.

Very few persons other than Black students and their parents cared whether the publicly supported school system in Montgomery County, Maryland was effectively serving the educational needs of minority students to the optimum extent possible - - whether the school system was preparing them to be competent and productive people. The likelihood is that it really did not matter very much, especially for decision-makers.

Thirty-two years have passed since the Supreme Court issued the Brown v. Topeka, Kansas, Board of Education decision, which forced Montgomery County schools along with thousands of other school systems to change the way it delivers public education services. Many years of evasion, avoidance, backing and filling, and efforts at compliance have taken place since the May 1954 decision, in Montgomery County as well as other school systems the length and breadth of the nation.

Bringing about the changes required for full implementation of the Court decision was not, and still is not an easy task. It has not been easy to translate the decision into concrete and lasting positive change. Converting a century old segregated public education system into an equitable and integrated system is no small feat. There is simply so much

bad history to overcome. Vestiges of past practices tend to linger long after the law says they are no longer permissible or rational thought can provide plausible justification for them.

From the CMRMC's perspective, the "Minority Student Improvement" effort is another step away from the past, and it is hoped, in the direction of becoming a school system which will be fully capable of understanding and meeting the needs of those students it was not required to pay much attention to in earlier times. The improvement effort should be another building block toward an effective school system for Hispanic and Black students also.

While keeping this historical view firmly in place, the CMRMC, as is true for some in minority communities as well as other advocates for effective and equitable schools, continued during the 1985-86 school year to study carefully policies, plans and practices which will give a reading on the direction and rate of change in MCPS. Although hoping for encouraging news, the CMRMC operated on the premise that after three years of the "Minority Student Improvement" effort, it was important to know what the critical indicators had to say, whether good, bad or indifferent. In other words, the CMRMC was Looking For A Sign.

Content

This report is about providing an equitable and quality education to public school students in Montgomery County, Maryland. It represents a continuation of the CMRMC's concern for the educational development of all students in MCPS, with special emphasis on those who are racial and ethnic minorities. In the course of preparing this paper, the CMRMC will take a careful look at several critical indicators and content areas in an attempt to ascertain what progress has been made since the 1984-85 report was written and presented.

The CMRMC turned to its customary data source for the numbers which are the foundation for this report. That source is the MCPS system itself. There has been no attempt obtain data from any other source.

Among the important indicators which will be included in the study is that of professional staffing. The CMRMC report for 1984-85 addressed the issue of staffing for the first time in several years. It was timely and appropriate to look at the subject for a number of reasons. Prominent among the reasons is that the school system is making an effort to become a fair and equitable system in its entirety, which means as an employer as well as an educational organization. Furthermore, MCPS prior to the beginning of the 1984-85 school year was on the threshold of hiring several hundred new teachers, which presented an opportunity to begin correcting the gross

imbalance in the utilization of minority teachers. Given the sharply rising minority student population, both in numbers and as a percentage of the total, a look at the MCPS hiring and promotion practices for professional employees was an important undertaking. It is necessary to see if any changes have been made in the intervening year.

One area of MCPS responsibility where the CMRMC is forever, it seems, looking for a positive sign is the matter of student suspensions. Black and Hispanic students, especially Black and decidedly male, consistently and traditionally bear the brunt of this disciplinary action. Despite its plethora of resources, the school system during the past ten years has only tinkered at the margin of the problem with minimal results. The CMRMC will review the 1985-86 school year experience as an important part of this report.

A review of standardized test scores will be an important part of the 1985-86 report. These test results are viewed as one important indicator of the progress and success of the minority student improvement effort. Furthermore, the competency tests required for graduation by the State of Maryland are taking on added significance as the time approaches when passing them will become essential in order for each student to receive a high school diploma. An analysis of the data and possible recommendations will be included in this report.

This CMRMC report will contain the third consecutive review and analysis of special education principles and practices for MCPS. The findings reported in the previous reports were disturbing, to say the least. The central issue as far as the CMRMC is concerned is the overrepresentation of Black students in special education classes. Following new policy directives and implementation of extensive proposals for change, it is necessary to determine what effect they have had on the problem.

The Gifted/Talented Programs have in recent years been among the MCPS school activities least likely to provide equality of opportunity to all students. A five year effort was begun in 1982 to address the problem of serious under-representation of Hispanic and Black students in K-8 Gifted/Talented Programs. It is now time to understand whether the efforts to improve those minority students' level of participation have brought about significant change. The discussion presented in this report will be the first analytical review of the subject by the CMRMC in three years.

Finally, the central thread running throughout this report is that of minority student achievement, especially as reflected in MCPS/BOE Priority II. As noted earlier, the improvement effort has been in place over three school years, beginning in 1983-84. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that some signs of progress and change are beginning to appear. The beginnings of clear and incontrovertible evidence should be available that the school system has improved its

effectiveness in serving the educational needs of Hispanic and Black students. Time is moving right along.

The CMRMC made an effort to study the results of Priority II Programs effort following the 1984-85 school year. There were many questions which needed answering. This report contains a rather comprehensive review of the MCPS Minority Student Improvement Effort.

MCPS Staff Response to 1984-85 Report

The subject areas briefly cited above will constitute the body of the 1985-86 CMRMC report on Montgomery County Public Schools. But before proceeding to the detailed discussion on each entity, it is necessary to briefly discuss one additional matter in this introductory section. That matter is the Staff Response to the previous CMRMC report.

The response prepared by staff was discussed by the Superintendent at the BOE meeting which was held on March 11, 1986. The report was apparently completed earlier. It was dated December 10, 1985 which means that it was held for several months before it was released. The CMRMC wishes that the Staff Response had been retained as an internal document and not released for public reading and use. The content and tone of that document were disquieting. Many thoughts included in the paper did not contribute significantly to clarifying issue, and in many instances did not address the questions and issues raised in the CMRMC report.

For example, on the first page of the Staff Response and in reference to issues the CMRMC Report discussed, such comments as the following were made: "The issues that CMRMC identified are not unique to MCPS. They are problems common to most school districts. If these problems had easy or quick solutions, they would have been found long ago."[1/]

Page two of the Staff Response paper makes many points, including the following:

> "... the statistical disproportions pointed out by the CMRMC are not caused by MCPS actions or procedures, but rather are the product of complex social factors."
>
> "Suspensions, student placements, and similar actions are based on discrete circumstances and what appear to be in the best interest of all students as well as individual students...."
>
> "The CMRMC report does not give sufficient credit for actions taken by MCPS to address the root causes of very complex issues."

1/ Staff Response to the CMRMC Report December 10, 1985. p. 1.

There are so many things which could be said about these and other such comments, but it is better not to be diverted from the primary task. But a brief comment on the matter of "credit" may be warranted and permissible. A debate or even discussion on how much credit is due MCPS is just about the last thing that is needed because it will not help a single student. The CMRMC raises issues because it believes such issues represent shortcomings in the ability of MCPS to serve the educational needs of students, and thereby prevents students from developing to their full potential.

Finally, issues and problems are raised by the CMRMC in the hope and full expectation that all of the persons legally responsible for making policy and operating the MCPS system will correct deficiencies and run an effective school system for all students. Those who fail to fulfill their responsibilities, whether elected or appointed, need to be replaced. Receiving remuneration, in some instances handsomely, is one form of credit. Doing the job of educating students fairly, equitably and well really is its own reward.

The People Factor in MCPS

One key to the success of any organization are the people who make up the work force. Even in this era of burgeoning technology, people continue to be the critical and indispensable element for achieving goals by businesses, institutions and all other forms of organizations. That is particularly true for those entities which are labor intensive in their mix of the basic elements which are producing whatever the end product happens to be.

It is difficult to find any organization which is more labor intensive than a school system. Public education organizations rely on the human element to achieve the goals and objectives set by law as much as any other organization which comes to mind. Furthermore, its primary product is people, students who have been recipients of whatever knowledge, insights, perceptions and commitments their teachers and administrators bring to the task.

Therefore, if people are so important in the entire process of operating an effective school system, it should logically follow that among the most important tasks which policy makers and administrators have is that of managing the process of acquiring, training, maintaining, rewarding and utilizing people well. By well is meant in the most cost-effective, program-efficient, fair and objective manner possible.

Furthermore, getting the best possible return from people even in a very small high labor use organization is a very serious challenge. To do so in a public school system employing over 6,700 professional persons and more than 8,800 support staff requires extraordinary wisdom, uncommon judgement, and an inordinate sense of fairness. Even in the best of circumstances, some persons will question whether or not they are being utilized well and dealt with fairly. Managing people is indeed a tough chore. Nonetheless, managing the personnel process so that people, especially within the system, will have confidence in the integrity of the system is doable. This report will offer the CMRMC's views on how well it believes the MCPS is doing in this important area of its responsibility.

The CMRMC's 1984-85 report on hiring and promotion of professional staff in the school system elicited a strong and sharp response following its release in August of 1985. Undoubtedly, this report will also raise strong objections, primarily from persons who will disagree with the Committee's interpretation of the numbers used in the following analysis. It will be difficult if not impossible to find fault with the numbers which identify minority teachers, principals and other professionals hired, retained, promoted and cashiered. The numbers used will be MCPS numbers.

Despite all of the importance usually attached to role models for all students in pronouncements from MCPS, the school system's reputation in hiring, utilization and promotion of

professional staff in terms of basic fairness and equitable treatment leaves much to be desired. In summary, it is not good, whether the Board and administration acknowledge it or not.

That perception does not originate with the CMRMC, but comes voluntarily from many persons who have spent long years within the system. Some professional staffers describe working conditions at their school sites approximating those of a plantation with no recourse or possibility of relief from unfair treatment or grossly inadequate working conditions.

The underlying question is what impact such conditions, real or imagined, have on the education of students. How are students affected when the persons responsible for educating them have no confidence, at least in the personnel management of the school system? It is important to address that question, but first it is necessary to look at basic data in order to put the discussion in context.

The 1985-86 Experience

The following numbers make the point that MCPS grew modestly in student enrollment over the preceding year. The trend again was that of an increasing number and percentage of minority students and a slight decline in both categories for White students. Following are numbers taken from the Statistical Profile Report 1985-86[2/] which illustrates the student population changes during the last school year.

Table I shows that there was an increase of 1173 students in schools and centers during the 1985-86 school year over the preceding year, and a minority student enrollment increase of 1229 for the same period. Minority students were 30.1 percent of the total enrollment in MCPS during 1985-86 according to official statistics.

Minority professional staff and especially teacher participation lags far behind minority student percentage in the school system. As Table II shows, there were 799 minority professionals employed during 1985-86, an increase of 32 over the preceding year. A modest increase and a missed opportunity in view of the fact that the professional staff increased by 267, and there were more than 600 new hires to compensate for the normal attrition in addition to the increased enrollment.

[2/]Montgomery County Public Schools, Statistical Profiles, 1985-86., p. 20.

TABLE I

MCPS Data for Students in Schools and Centers

	Race/Ethnicity			
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
	1984-85		1985-86	
White	65,410	71.3	64,934	69.9
American Indian	136	0.2	140	0.2
Asian	8,024	8.8	8,759	9.4
Black	13,321	14.5	13,765	14.8
Hispanic	4,807	5.2	5,273	5.7
Total Minority	(26,294)	(28.7)	(27,937)	(30.1)
Total Student Enrollment	91,698		92,871	

TABLE II

MCPS Data for Professional Staff in Schools and Centers

	1984-85 Race/Ethnicity		1985-86 Race/Ethnicity	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
White	5,712	88.2	5,948	88.2
Minority	767	11.8	799	11.8
Total	6,479		6,747	

The percentage of minority professional employees of the total professional staff for 1985-86 was precisely the same as for 1984-85, 11.8 percent. Not a good sign.

Staff Utilization By Area and For Selected Schools

There are other aspects of the 1985-86 experience which require careful review and analysis in order to put in perspective how well NCPS is doing in fact as opposed to fantasy in personnel management and use. Many organizations claim to be ardent practitioners of "equal employment opportunity," even in this era when our federal executive branch of government aligns itself with those opposed to it generally and affirmative action in particular. But alas, many have only their claims to offer as evidence of their commitment to the principle of fairness and equality of opportunity in employment.

The CMRMC studied carefully the professional minority staff utilization for schools in each of the three administrative areas for the 1984-85 school year. The results were discussed in the 1984-85 report, with considerable attention given to the utilization of minority teachers, especially where there was significant enrollment of minority students. Believe it or not there were schools without minority teachers or minority professionals of any kind. The Committee hoped that the BOE and the administration would immediately put an end to staffing patterns at school sites which should never have been allowed to exist in the first place.

The CMRMC is asking every reader of this paper to pay careful attention to the numbers in the following tables and

decide whether there is a problem in the schools referred to, and whether MCPS can be adjudged an equal opportunity employer in those school sites. It is important to keep in mind the fact that the all-inclusive category of "Professional Staff" covers such jobs as librarians, counselors, etc., as well as teachers. Therefore, it is possible to have two or three minority staff members and no minority teachers.

The CMRMC does not argue for a proportional representation of teachers to enrollment of students for minorities, but it does believe that there is need to have minorities in representative numbers in positions of responsibility. It is especially important to have minority teachers and administrators visible to all persons, and especially students. Therefore, Forest Knolls Elementary School where only one of its 36 professionals is a minority while nearly one-third of its students are minorities sends a very bad signal to students, parents and community at large as far as the CMRMC is concerned. How such a staff pattern can be permitted is beyond comprehension.

TABLE III

Utilization of Minority Professional Staff By Selected Schools, 1985-86[3/]

Area 1 Schools	Minority Professional Staff (Number)	Total Professional Staff (Number)	Minority Students As Percentage of of Total
Belmont E.S.	1	23	8.8
Forest Knolls "	1	36	32.8
Bel Pre "	2	30	38.7
Olney "	2	24	18.0
Rockview "	2	29	32.8
Sherwood "	2	25	21.3
Stonegate "	2	27	37.7
Wheaton Woods "	2	34	36.0
Burtonsville "	3	30	17.7
Wm. H. Farguhar M.S.	3	61	16.3
Galway E.S.	3	28	37.0
Harmony Hills "	3	28	46.4
Georgian Forest "	3	28	49.3
Viers Mill "	3	40	40.1
Weller Road "	3	32	37.5
Wheaton H.S.	11	93	40.2

3/Ibid. The numbers in this table were taken from individual school profiles on several pages in the Statistical Profiles, 1985-86.

TABLE IV

Utilization of Minority Professional Staff By Selected Schools, 1985-86

Area 2 Schools	Minority Professional Staff (Number)	Total Professional Staff (Number)	Minority Students As Percentage of Total
Seven Locks E.S.	0	18	24.3
Bannockburn "	1	25	22.5
College Gardens "	1	28	30.8
Garrett Park "	1	27	30.7
Bradley Hills "	2	28	23.9
Burning Tree "	2	29	30.6
Cabin John J.H.S.	2	47	22.3
Chevy Chase E.S.	2	26	34.3
Flower Valley "	2	32	21.5
Luxmanor "	2	22	12.4
Meadow Hall "	2	30	22.4
Potomac "	2	22	24.2
Somerset "	2	20	24.9
Wayside "	2	30	17.1
Herbert Hoover J.H.S.	3	49	24.1
N. Chevy Chase E.S.	3	25	51.4
Tilden I.S.	3	59	37.5
E.B. Wood J.H.S.	3	73	20.2
W. Johnson H.S.	4	68	23.3
Winston Churchill H.S.	5	110	17.5

Area II, as was true for Area I, has many schools where staffing is out of balance by any criteria. The utilization of minority teachers and other professional staff seems too often to be the exception rather than the rule. To state it differently, it is not difficult to believe that at some point in the decision-making process the decision is to exclude minority professionals rather than to be inclusive. It is difficult to imagine the school staffing patterns which exist otherwise.

Area III schools do not improve the employment picture for minority professional staff at all. To be honest about the matter, all things considered, Area III schools are the worst offenders. It is difficult to understand how the Board of Education or school administration can permit such a large number of schools to underutilize minority teacher and other professionals to the degree that it occurred during school year 1985-86.

The following list is by no means exhaustive but does give an indication of how seriously deficient is the hiring of minority teachers by schools in Area III.

TABLE V

Utilization of Minority Professional Staff By Selected Schools, 1985-86[4/]

Area 3 Schools	Minority Professional Staff (Number)	Total Professional Staff (Number)	Minority Students As Percentage of Total
Cashell E.S.	1	28	8.5
Cedar Grove "	1	22	6.4
Darnestown "	1	29	10.9
Du Fief "	1	32	13.4
Germantown "	1	41	15.4
Washington Grove "	1	30	23.1
Damascus H.S.	2	80	6.7
Candlewood E.S.	2	28	23.2
Fallsmead "	2	24	20.4
Fields Road "	2	28	32.8
Flower Hill "	2	35	32.1
Monocacy "	2	18	13.7
Poolsville "	2	38	9.4
Rosemont "	2	28	28.9
South Lake "	2	32	25.5
Stedwiek "	2	36	13.5
Watkins Mill "	2	35	23.7
Whetstone "	2	37	20.6
Woodfield "	2	39	5.4
John T. Butler I.S.	2	42	6.7
Clarksburg E.S.	3	36	6.9
Laytonsville "	3	34	10.6
Lake Seneca "	3	47	17.8
Lakewood "	3	34	24.8
Travilah "	3	27	18.8

[4/] Ibid.

The point should be made that some schools have done well in hiring minority professional staff, unlike Du Fief and Germantown Elementary Schools which were staffed by Whites only in 1984-85 and each had only one minority professional in 1985-86/ Gaithersburg Elementary School had a staff comprised of thirty percent minorities and a minority pupil percentage slightly above thirty two. Such a balanced staffing ratio should be a source of pride for the system. Proof that it can be done.

Other schools which do not seem to have a phobia about minority professionals are Westland Intermediate, Bethesda, Kensington Park, Maryvale, Greenwood and Ritchie Park Elementary Schools, and Sherwood High School. But they are exceptions.

It is difficult, if not possible to understand how Damascus High School which had two minority professionals out of eighty, or Churchill High School with five minorities out of one hundred ten total staff, or numerous other schools can be allowed to have such callous disregard for any semblance of balance and equity in hiring staff.

A legitimate conclusion is that there are many principals in the system who have chosen deliberately not to hire Asian, Hispanic and Black professional educators, and can do so with impunity. In the view of the CMRMC, their refusal to hire minorities is supported by the weak system of accountability which exists in MCPS. Protestations to the contrary notwithstanding.

Trying to sort out who is responsible for this unfortunate state of affairs only increases the frustration level of the CMRMC. Principals are known to have the power to veto applicants or nominees for employment, and it is an open secret that some exercise that authority in a highly selective and exclusionary manner.

On the other hand, the Director of Personnel Services (who has been in the job since January 1986), informed the CMRMC in conversation this past spring that Area Associate Superintendents can require principals to meet the requirements for balanced staffing. If that is the case, the obvious question is why they do not override hiring decisions by principals which fail to adequately meet the balanced staffing criterion. What prevents the Area Associate Superintendents from requiring balanced staffing in every school in the area which they administer?

Then, of course, the next question has to be: Where are the Superintendent and the Board of Education on this issue? Since the system is failing in this matter, is there anything they can do? Maybe more appropriately the question should be whether there is anything they will do?

A New Approach

In the light of the minority recruiting and hiring debacle prior to the 1985-86 school year, the Superintendent established a Minority Recruitment Team (MRT) to assist the Department of Personnel Services in building an expanded pool of minority teacher applicants. Establishing the MRT was important and praiseworthy in that it signalled a change in the way recruitment of minorities would be done in MCPS in the future.

Beyond the importance of the symbolism, it brought expert and committed help to bear on a problem which was badly in need of attention. Early indications are that the results of the MRT's efforts will amply justify the creation of that specialized staff.

An added benefit resulting from the creation of the MRT is that it nearly doubled the number of minority staff persons working on personnel matters in the MCPS system. Before the establishment of the MRT, only six of the 53 persons in the Department of Personnel Services were minorities. By any standard, a depressingly low ratio. And if the office responsible for recruiting and hiring has a staffing pattern badly skewed against minorities, experience teaches that it is unreasonable to expect their work product to be better than they are. The MCPS experience in personnel matters during recent years does nothing to disprove that notion.

Adding four minority staffers to the six already on board at the beginning of 1986 does not mean that all minority recruitment and hiring problems are solved, because they are not. A review of the current staffing of the Department of Personnel Services immediately identifies some imbalances which remain in the staff.

TABLE VI

Department of Personnel Services Staff, MCPS[5/]

Job Category	Total	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Male	Female
A & S	5	3			2	5	
Other Prof.	4	4				3	1
Teacher	4	1	2	1			4
Clerical	32	28	3		1		32
Staff	12	11	1			5	7
Total	57	47	6	1	3	13	44

For example, only one Asian-American is on the staff, and not one female functions in an administrative or supervisory position. Furthermore, there is no Asian-American or Black American in a supervisory or administrative position. The existing arrangement is an improvement over what existed previously, but there is room for much more improvement.

[5/] The information in Table VI was provided by the Department of Personnel Services, dated May 22, 1986.

While counting the MRT staff in the Department's manning table, it must not be forgotten that the MRT is a temporary arrangement. In the concluding section of this discussion on personnel, the CMRMC will make recommendations for what it believes will bring much needed and lasting improvements to the system in managing personnel for MCPS.

Some Concluding Thoughts on People Management

To reiterate the point which was made at the beginning of this discussion, people and the manner in which they are utilized are among the most important critical elements for determining the success of any organization. Which is another way of saying that the success of an organization depends on the degree to which the work force believes in the objectivity and basic fairness with which they and others are treated. Assuming that there is a kernel of truth in the preceding statements, it is then fair to say that the MCPS system has a problem of serious proportions because it does not enjoy the confidence of a significant portion of its employees. That is especially true of minority professional employees.

In more than a few instances, persons of long tenure expressed to the CMRMC their belief that the "good old boy network" is alive and thriving in the school system. The CMRMC's 1984-85 report pointed out that nearly two-thirds of intermediate, junior and senior high school principals were

white males. The ratio was approximately the same for the 1985-86 school year, and that is hardly accidental.

A large body of folklore surrounds the process by which persons are chosen to become administrative interns, an important early step in becoming a candidate for principalship. According to information received by the CMRMC, even successfully completing all three administrative competence skill tasks, the group interview, individual interview and written requirements, is not enough to advance minority candidates for consideration as interns. It seems that "slight of hand" takes over at points in the selection process and as a result, minority candidates are much less likely to receive an internship and to move on to principalship in the system. And this process accounts in large measure for the numbers being so badly skewed against minorities in the ranks of principals. Given the numbers, there certainly has to be some plausible explanation for what is happening in the system.

In addition to the difficulty encountered in becoming a candidate for a principalship, it appears that some who finally become principals have great difficulty in retaining their job. Clearly some elements within the community have refined the technique for pushing Black principals out of their position - - and with minimal effort. During recent years, Black principals have been targeted by vigilantes who mount up and go get their man - - or more accurately in recent years, their woman. A colloquialism born of this experience is that

for minorities, principal's jobs are hard to come by and even harder to keep.

There are several things the CMRMC believes are worth considering and which may improve the minority communities' view of people management in MCPS, as well as improve the efficiency of the personnel system.

1) Abolish the Minority Recruitment Team as a separate entity, but transfer its functions to the Department of Personnel Services permanently.
2) Expand minority staffing in the Department of Personnel Services to achieve a more representative staffing pattern than currently exist.
3) Place females, Asian and Blacks in administrative and supervisory positions in the Department of Personnel Services.
4) Establish a written policy for balanced staffing in each school, and enforce the policy without exception.
5) Make clear to all staff the policy for selecting administrative interns and principals. Remove all the sleight of hand from the process.
6) Take steps immediately to abolish the system which preferentially hires White males as principals.

Handicapped by Race ... And Sex?

The CMRMC has been concerned about the overrepresentation of Black students in special education classes in MCPS for a long time, and for good reason. The 1985-86 school year data indicate that there is as much cause to be concerned about these students now and into the future, as ever. There simply has not been any perceptible progress in reducing the extraordinarily high participation rate of Black students in special education classes. The CMRMC has been patiently looking for a positive sign. There is none.

One reason why the 1985-86 data are such a disappointment is the fact that there has been extensive discussion about the problem and its severity within the school system for such a long time. It is not unfair to say that the school system in general and the Office of Special and Alternative Education in particular have done a fine job in defining the nature of the problems and articulating the implications of these problems for the entire school system.

To its credit, the BOE has allotted significant time on its agendas to the discussion of special education problems over the past three years. Especially were there important discussions during the January 8, 1985 and March 25, 1985 BOE meetings. One outcome of the extensive discussions between the Board, Superintendent and staff on special education matters was the presentation of a Special Education Initiatives Paper

on July 9, 1985 which was approved by the BOE at its September 23, 1985 meeting.

The Initiatives Paper contained what the Superintendent described as "the three most important special education issues that require our attention."[6/] These issues were: (1) the need to improve the special education student's transition from school to work; (2) assuring appropriate assessment and placement of students in special education; and (3) the need to integrate special and alternative education faculty requirements into the Comprehensive Master Plan for Educational Facilities.

All of the goals are important, but the second of the three raised hopes and expectations that MCPS was on the threshhold of important changes in the way it addressed the needs of all students who may be considered for special education classes. The CMRMC hoped that the end was at hand especially for the pernicious practice of wholesale movement of Black students -- and particularly Black Male Students into special education.

Although Goal Two was expressed in terms of improving identification and placement procedures, the hope was that the problem of Black student overrepresentation would be a by-product of that planning and work effort. As the following tables will show, the plans and actions on Goal Two never

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6/ Cover memorandum from the Superintendent to Members of the Board of Education, MCPS Initiatives for Special Education, July 9, 1985, p. 2.

translated into lower numbers and percentages of Black students in special education classes during 1985-86. This is a matter of severe disappointment to the CMRMC, and will most likely be for all of the community when the facts are known.

Furthermore, explaining away the serious overrepresentation of Black students in certain MCPS special education classes as a phenomenon found in a great many U.S. school systems is both disingenious and unworthy. This is especially true for a school system which prides itself on being on the cutting-edge of progress and change. Segregation was a phenomenon once found in a great many U.S. school systems,[7/] but was neither good nor right, for students or the nation.

Bad News By The Numbers

Improving the transition from school to work and integrating special education facilities requirement into the Master Plan are surely important issues, but neither is as important as excessive representation of students ... particularly when they should not be in special education at all. The CMRMC has felt for sometime that the disparity in the ratios of Black students and others really means that some unlucky young people should never be classified as needing

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7/Superintendent's Memorandum conveying the staff response to the CMRMC Report To The Board of Education, December 10, 1985, p. 1.

TABLE VII

MCPS Handicapped Students by Handicapping Conditions and Race, May, 1986[8]

Percentage of All Students

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	AMER. IND.	TOTAL
	64,934 71.0%	13,765 14.8%	5,273 5.7%	8,759 9.4%	140 0.2%	92,871
Handicapping Condition						
Mentally Retarded	68.7	21.1	5.3	4.7	0.2	
Hard of Hearing	69.3	15.8	8.9	5.9	0	
Deaf	71.3	13.0	7.4	8.3	0	
Speech/Language Impaired	69.6	18.7	4.7	6.8	0.2	
Visually Handicapped	68.5	18.5	5.6	7.4	0	
Emotionally Impaired	68.5	27.	2.5	0.1	0.2	
Orthopedically Impaired	79.5	10.8	3.6	4.8		
Other Health Impaired	75.	0	18.7	6.7	0.2	
Specific Learning Disability	64.8	27.4	5.0	2.5	0.3	
Multi-Handicapped	63.5	29.8	3.5	3.1	0.2	
Child in Need of Assessment	60.	25.9	8.8	0	0.2	

[8]/This table is derived from a memorandum prepared by the Office for Special and Alternative Education and forwarded to the CMRMC by the Superintendent of Education. Date of the memorandum, June 4, 1986. This is an unduplicated count.

special education at all. That proposition is difficult to prove from the outside. There is absolutely no chance that the case will be made from the inside.

Nonetheless, the numbers alone are instructive. And what the numbers tell us for 1985-86 is that, as was true for the previous year, and the year before that, Black students were the only major racial/ethnic group in the MCPS population whose percentage of special education students consistently exceeds their percentage in the total student population. The problem is especially serious in those special education codes or classifications where there is broad latitude for judgement to be exercised in determining whether a student has a handicapping condition.

Summary tables on handicapped students by handicapping conditions are included for the past two years. This enables the reader to compare changes in percentages for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

While 14.8 percent of the MCPS student population in 1985-86, Black students were 21.1 percent of those classified as mentally retarded, 27.5 percent of the emotionally impaired, 27.4 percent of the learning disabled and 29.8 percent of the students adjudged to be multiply-handicapped.[9/]

Please note that in every instance, in each of the classifications cited in the preceeding paragraph, the 1985-86

[9/]The figure for Other Health Impaired was not available during the writing of this paper as it was in years past.

Table VIII

MCPS Handicapped Students By Handicapping Conditions And Race As of March 14, 1985[1]

Percentage of All Students

	White	%	Black	%	Hispanic	%	Asian	%	Am/Ind	%	Total
	56,310	71.0	13,360	14.5	4,947	5.4	8,249	9.0	141	.2	92,007
Handicapping Condition											
Mentally Retarded		68.9		20.9		4.6		5.2		.4	
Hard of Hearing		71.9		16.9		5.6		5.6		0	
Deaf		74.1		8.9		8.9		8.0		0	
Speech/Language Impaired		69.1		19.2		5.0		6.5		.2	
Visually Handicapped		69.2		19.6		6.5		4.7		0	
Emotionally Impaired		70.5		25.8		2.2		1.2		.3	
Orthophedically Impaired		79.2		11.7		2.6		5.2		1.3	
Other Health Impaired		33.3		33.3		25.0		8.3		0	
Specific Learning Disability		65.4		27.6		4.6		2.2		.2	
Multi-Handicapped		65.5		26.1		4.6		3.8		0	
Child in Need of Assess.		63.4		26.8		5.5		3.8		.5	

[1]This table is derived from a MCPS summary statistical sheet of Unduplicated Count of Students by Handicapping Race, March 14, 1985

TABLE VII

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Visually Handicapped	68.5	18.5	5.6	7.4	0	
Emotionally Impaired	68.5	27.	2.5	0.1	0.2	
Orthopedically Impaired	79.5	10.8	3.6	4.8		
Other Health Impaired	75.	0	18.7	6.7	0.2	
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Multi-Handicapped	63.5	29.8	3.5	3.1	0.2	
Child in Need of Assessment	60.	25.9	8.8	0	0.2	

3.)

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[8]/This table is derived from a memorandum prepared by the Office for Special and Alternative Education and forwarded to the CMRMC by the Superintendent of Education. Date of the memorandum, June 4, 1986. This is an unduplicated count.

figures, even though only slightly, were higher than the same figures for 1984-85. And this was to be a year of improvement.That is only part of the bad news. The other part of it is the fact that Black male students continue to be "targets of opportunity" for serving time in special education classes in MCPS. They continue to bear an unduly large share of the burden in the handicapped classification cited above.

Among the students classified as emotionally impaired, 27.5 percent of whom were Black during the 1985-86 school year, 78 percent of the Black students were males, over 27 percent of the students with specific learning disabilities were Black and two-thirds of them were also males. Ad infinitum.

The point is that in those special education classifications which are not orthopedic or physically handicapping, and those where the largest number of students are consigned, Black students, especially males are disproportionately represented. That is distressing. Until this issue is addressed directly, not by circumvention, such matters as transition and facilities will have minimal significance for the affected students and their families.

The CMRMC is aware that groups are at work which may tangentially touch this problem through their efforts. But it is not certain that even if successful in their tasks as defined, that they will ever meet face-to-face the problem of Black student overrepresentation in special education classes. There will undoubtedly be solutions at some point in the

process, but whether the solutions achieved will address the problems of concern to Black parents is still an open question.

Finally, the CMRMC made several recommendations in its two previous reports on this subject. It continues to believe that the recommendation are worth considering. The Committee offers three additional general ideas for the reader:

1) Keep the issue of overrepresentation in sharp focus as work groups proceed.
2) Expand the involvement of students and parents in every possible step of the work processes, and
3) Resist the temptation to raise the old saw that "overrepresentation of minority students in special education is a national problem" ... if possible in 1986-87.

Test Results and Their Meaning

Black and Hispanic students in the aggregate have not done well on standardized test given by MCPS. That has been true in the past just as it was for school year 1985-86. Of course there has been modest improvement in test scores for those populations in certain years, for some subjects, at some grade levels. But on the whole, as far as the CMRMC is concerned, there really has not been a lot of good news to shout about.

As the Superintendent reported to the BOE in his February 26, 1986 Memorandum, the results from one battery of test, the California Achievement Tests (CAT), administered in the fall of 1985 indicated that the upward trend of test scores continued.[10/] "The percentile ranks for the average scores in each grade tested are 86 in third grade, 87 in fifth grade, 84 in eighth grade, and 80 in eleventh grade."[11/] Quite impressive by any standard.

The system-wide upward trend of the test scores is important but does not tell the whole story. A disaggregation of the test scores by race/ethnicity and grade level is instructive for determining how well the students most in need of help are doing. That process will help all interested parties understand what progress is being made within MCPS in

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10/Memorandum from the Superintendent to the BOE on 1985 California Achievement Test Results, February 26, 1986.

11/Ibid.

learning how to educate Black and Hispanic students. That will be the focus of the following discussion.

Table IX which follows, presents very graphically an excellent look at some aspects of results for the two most recent years of test administration. The numbers in the table were extracted from several tables in MCPS comprehensive presentation of 1985 CAT results.

Scores in the following table are reported in Percentile Ranks (PR), which are designed to show the percentage of students in the national norm sample who scored below a specified score. In other words, a percentile rank of 50 means that half of the students in the norming sample scored below 50.

Scores in the table are also reported as Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE), which means that there is uniformity in the value or measurement of equal interval scores. Stated differently, a 5 point NCE change is the same at any point on the scale.

The rising trend for CAT scores in all three major subject areas, reading, language and mathematics for all students tested during 1985 over the previous year was impressive. On the other hand stagnation or decline in scores for Hispanic and Black students was quite discouraging.

Table IX shows that the NCE point gain for Black students occurred in Grades 5 and 8 for all subjects. But there, was no gain in the language test in Grade 11. Even more unsettling is the fact that in 1985 there was no increase in CAT Scores in

TABLE IX

California Achievement Test Results
For Black and Hispanic Students
1984 and 1985[12]

Grade/Year		Total Reading				Total Language				Total Math			
		Black		Hispanic		Black		Hispanic		Black		Hispanic	
		NCE Mean	Per Rank	NCE Mean	Per Rank	NCE Mean	Per Rank	NCE Mean	Per Rank	NCE Mean	Per Rank	NCE Mean	Per Rank
3	1985	53	56	56	61	59	67	63	73	57	63	62	72
	1984	53	56	57	63	59	67	63	73	57	63	64	75
5	1985	55	59	57	63	60	68	66	78	58	65	64	75
	1984	54	58	57	63	59	67	65	76	57	63	63	73
8	1985	55	59	56	61	56	61	58	65	58	65	62	72
	1984	54	58	56	61	54	58	59	67	56	61	61	70
11	1985	51	52	55	59	50	50	53	56	52	54	56	61
	1984	50	50	54	58	50	50	52	54	51	52	55	59

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[12]/Derived from tables on Test Results for Black and Hispanic students, 1980-85, MCPS.

any subject area at Grade 3 for Black students. In other words, there was also bad news which resulted from CAT scores as well as good news.

Many of the test results from Hispanic students were equally as distressing as they were for Black students. Not only did Hispanic student scores fail to increase in some subject areas in some of the grades tested, but scores actually dropped in Math and Reading for Grade 3 and in Language for Grade 8. Two NCE Points were lost by these students on the Math battery and one at Grade 3 in Reading.

One reason why this is such distressing news for both minority school populations is that the early grades have most often been where the greatest progress occurred. Black students have traditionally done much better and tested well in the earlier grades, tapering off or even declining by time they reach the latter grades. Which is another way of saying that the phenomena of higher scores correlating to length of time in the school system does not apply in many instances, to Black students especially. The longer Black students are in MCPS in the aggregate, the lower their score is likely to be, according to data released by MCPS in May 1986.[13/]

13/ Please see the Superintendent's Memorandum to the BOE, "Achievement as a Function of Years in MCPS for Minority Students," May 13, 1986. Charts on pages A-2 and A-5 are quite specific on this issue. Tables B-5 through B-8 in the same memorandum also contradict the theory.

Another reason why stagnant and declining CAT scores at this point come as such a disappointment is that the initial effects of the Minority Student Improvement effort, (Priority 2) should have begun to surface by the time these tests were given. The wide range of special emphasis activities, all designed to improve the achievement of minority students should be manifested in rising standardized test scores rather than declining or even stagnant scores. This is an occurrence which requires close scrutiny. It is worthwhile investing resources in order to understand what is behind these unexpected test results.

One final observation is necessary on the CAT results for 1985. Hispanic and Black students still score significantly lower than White students in all subject areas and at all four grade level at which the tests were administered. Black students continue to score lower in the aggregate than any of the other major racial or ethnic student populations in MCPS, at every grade level. They achieved modest gains in 1985 over 1984 scores.

Hispanic students on the other hand appear to be stymied in MCPS. Their progress was so limited in 1985 over the previous year, as reflected in both NCE and percentile rank scores as to be almost imperceptible. The trend line of their scores is virtually flat and has been for several years in all subject areas. The systematic CAT scores may be impressive and still increasing, but behind the good news, Black and Hispanic students are not doing well.

Competency Tests

The 1984-85 CMRMC report[14/] identified two Maryland Functional Tests which will be substantial obstacles to graduation for Hispanic and Black students in the years ahead. As reported, the 1984 Maryland Functional Writing Test (MFWT) and the Maryland Functional Math Test (MFRT) results were rather dismal for Black and Hispanic students. Unlike the Maryland Functional Reading Test (MFRT) which Hispanic students passed at a 92 percent rate in 1984 and Black students successfully completed at a 94 percent rate, the following table will show that the passing rate for Math was much lower.

Thirty-five percent of Black students taking the MFMT for the first time failed it in 1985, while 37 percent of Hispanic Ninth-graders taking the test failed it also. The passing rate for Black students in 1985 was higher than in 1984, but unfortunately just the opposite was true for Hispanic students.

Experience with the writing test was also dismal. Forty-six percent of Black students who took the MFWT in 1984 failed it as did half of the Hispanics in county schools. A reported 45.9 percent of Ninth-graders in Maryland failed the

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14/ Montgomery County Public Schools: An Underachieving System, A Report by the CMRMC, 1984-85, p. 42.

TABLE X[15/]

MCPS Results of the Maryland Functional Math Test
For Black and Hispanic Students, 1984-85

Grade	Year	Passing Percentage	
		Black	Hispanic
9	1985	65	63
	1984	57	66
10	1985	43	39
	1984	30	28
11	1985	40	36

writing test on taking it for the first time.[16/] Although the CMRMC has been unable to obtain figures for those tested or passing the MFWT for 1985, it is reasonable to assume the rate when revealed will reflect only a modest improvement over 1984. The statewide failure rate in 1984 caused State Superintendent of Education, David Hornbeck to postpone requiring a

[15/]The numbers in this table were derived from information provided by MCPS on Maryland Functional Test Results, 1982-85.

[16/]The Washington Times, April 18, 1986.

passing score for graduation until 1988, instead of 1987 as previously announced.

Criterion Referenced Test

Just as was true for the California Achievement Tests, the Maryland Functional Tests administered in MCPS during 1985 resulted in numbers which were good and bad. Some students and some schools achieved excellent results in terms of scores received and others did not do well at all. But there is one test administered in MCPS which remains, at least for the CMRMC, a great mystery. The test in question is the criterion - Referenced Tests in Narration (CRT-N). Inquiries have been made about these tests but the response has been very sparse indeed.

The CMRMC spent part of the 1985-86 school year trying to learn some basic things about the CRT-N such as: (1) What is the test about? (2) What purpose is it supposed to serve? (3) How does it relate or compare to the California Achievement Test? (4) Who developed the test and when? (5) When was it administered and to whom? (6) How often has it been administered? (7) What were the results of the most recent administering of the test? (8) Why have the results not been shared with students and parents? (9) What were the problems with the CRT-N, if any? What is behind the cloak of secrecy which has enveloped the entire matter?

In response to these and other questions about the CRT-N, some limited insight has been achieved, but the CMRMC's understanding of what is involved does not begin to scratch the surface on this issue. Some things learned, and not listed in any order of priority are the following:

1) The purpose of the CRT-N is to provide information on how well students are learning the objectives of the K-8 curricula in Math and Reading/Language Arts (narration only).
2) The CRT-N has been administered to MCPS students, test results are available, and a committee has reviewed and will make recommendations to the Superintendent regarding the use of these tests and the form in which the data whould be released.
3) Students score higher on the CAT than on the CRT-N.
4) CRT-N test materials are extracted from materials used in MCPS classrooms and thereby ought to be a better barometer for the effectiveness of instructions provided for students than the CAT.
5) The CRT-N is probably more difficult than the CAT, with the latter measuring skills in finding isolated facts in answer to questions, and the former measuring reading comprehension as a thinking process on a representative sample passages.
6) The design of the CRT-N should make it very sensitive to instruction, thereby opening the way for low-achieving

students to learn more difficult materials with appropriate instruction.

These are the more important ideas which the CMRMC has encountered during its inquiry about the CRT-N. Obviously there is much more to learn. Furthermore, this is a subject which parents and others interested in equity and excellence in education should pursue with diligence. Important decisions will be made within MCPS on CRT-N in the near-term. It is important to see that those decisions are made with the best interest of all students in mind. The CMRMC hopes that when this subject is placed on the agenda again, it will be in the interest of a full and open discussion of every aspect of the matter for all interested parties to learn as much as they care to know.

Concluding Thoughts on Tests and Testing

The subject of standardized and competency tests can be a complicated and confusing matter for most of us parents who do not have the high level of training in test and measurement skills which professional educators have. The truth is that many parents of students in MCPS during the 1986-87 school year will not understand the theory and construction of the CAT, Maryland Functional Tests, Criterion - Referenced Tests In Narration, the Scholastic Aptitude Test or others which their children are

expected to take and pass during the year. Therefore, they are at a distinct disadvantage very often, in simply understanding what the System is doing with and sometimes to their child.

In a sense, a public school system is very similar to a business corporation. It has a board of directors (school board) and professional management (administration) in charge of running the organization, and they do not necessarily make decisions which are in the best interest of the common stock holders (parents and students) who theoretically are the owners. Periodically the directors and management will ask shareholders for their proxy in order to maintain control over the business, generally tolerating no interference from the "owners".

The corollary between business and the school system has relevance on this subject of tests and test results. The school system can design its public relations strategy to serve its own ends, rather than the need of students. The school system can spread the "good news" through its public relations department on the rising test scores system-wide while ignoring or at least playing down the "bad news", designing its public announcements to put the best face on what it wishes to emphasize.

This is not to argue against telling the "good news" but it is to press for telling the not so good news as well, equally loudly. Share the information with students and parents. Give equal attention to those students who are achieving only marginal success. After all, the numbers reviewed in this section of the paper are as much as an indicator of the success or lack of it of the school system as it is of the student who attend the schools.

Gifted and Talented

The 1983-84 CMRMC report stated that the gifted and talented program activity had "one of the worst records imaginable when it comes to serving the educational needs of Hispanic and Black students, even with a modest amount of fairness and equity."[17/] That unequivocal statement was made primarily because it was true. The record of exclusion and failure to serve those minority students was very bad indeed, and had been carefully documented over the preceeding four years.

Attention was called to the serious deficiencies and inequities in the operation of the gifted and talented program by the BOE appointed Minority Relations Monitoring Committee during the 1980-81 school year. The CMRMC also addressed the subject in its 1981-82 and 1982-83 reports. Furthermore, the MCPS Department of Educational Recountability released its own study on the subject during the summer of 1983.

All of those studies essentially made the same point ... that Hispanic and Black students were denied a fair and equitable opportunity to participate in the program. Many parents were outraged that such a grossly inequitable program would be allowed to exist and continue to function in MCPS.

17/ Equal Educational Opportunity in Montgomery County Public Schools. Present in Theory, Absent in Practice, 1983-84, CMRMC Report, p. 37.

In its 1982-83 report, the CMRMC made the point that Black elementary school students who were 12.1 percent of the total population in MCPS were only 4.8 percent of the gifted and talented program participants, and Hispanic students who were 3.8 percent of all students were only 1 percent of participants.[18/] Underrepresentation of both groups in the program was standard practice.

The Department of Educational Accountability study[19/] did an excellent job of focusing attention on issues such as:

1) The sizeable increase in the percentage of students screened and selected for gifted and talented programs in 1980-81;
2) The fact that the larger number of students screened and selected benefitted Black and Hispanic students, who were the primary victims of exclusion from the program, less than White and Asian students; and
3) The propensity of teachers and other staff who were decision-makers on admission to the Gifted and Talented Program to select White and Asians rather than Black and Hispanic students. Staff from the gifted and talented program disagreed with the findings and even many of the recommendations for improvement, but the evidence of the

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18/ A Study of Children At-Risk, 1982-83, CMRMC Report, pp. 24-25.

19/ Screening and Prescreening for the Gifted and Talented Program 1980-81 and 1981-82 School Years, Department of Educational Accountability, June 1983.

biasness was so overwhelming that it was very difficult to make credible arguments to the contrary. As a matter of fact it was difficult to continue the charade, especially after the Superintendent's Advisory Committee on the Education of the Gifted and Talented laid out its bill of particulars about the shortcomings of the program. In November 1983, the Advisory Committee presented its report before the BOE, detailing meticulously for all to see the serious deficiencies in reaching and retaining Black and Hispanic students in the gifted and talented program.

In the light of recent history, the CMRMC thought that it would be timely and appropriate to review the progress of the past three years. The Committee has not addressed this issue in any detail since the release of its 1982-83 report.

Signs Pointed in the Right Direction

A review of recently released statistics on the participation of Black and Hispanic students in MCPS gifted and talented programs indicates that there may be reasons to hope that significant change may be in the offing. The following table provides a comparison of participation rates for students from 1982-83 to 1985-86, and slight encouragement is not unreasonable. An analysis of the years in between shows that the trend reflecting the participation of those two student populations is in the right direction.

The CMRMC does not wish to convey the notion that strong and decisive gains have been made in any of the years since 1982-83. But there have been modest incremental increases, which if continued over the next few years could improve the representation of Hispanic and Black students enough to bring the gifted and talented program into the category of an equal educational opportunity provider. There really is no reason why the program should not be exemplary in offering equal opportunity to the students of Montgomery County without regard to race, ethnicity or sex.

The table shows that the increase in participants from 1982-83 to 1985-86 was nearly 1300 students, and all of the minority student populations increased at a higher rate than their proportion of the school population. Asian students share of the increased participation in gifted and talented during the 1985-86 school year over 1982-83 was 37%, followed by Black students at 27% and Hispanic students at 11%. The Hispanic students' rate of increase in gifted and talented programs is the one area which causes some concern to the CMRMC at the present time.

Asian students' rate of participation in gifted and talented programs remains quite high, much higher than their percentage of the student population. Although 9.4% of total enrollment, 12.3 percent of elementary gifted/talented participants and 14.6 percent of junior and intermediate participants were Asian students.

TABLE XI

Participation In Gifted/Talented Programs[20]

(In Percentages)

	1982-83			1985-86		
	% of Total Enrollment[21]	Elementary Student Participation	Junior HS? Intermediate to School Participation	%of Total Enrollment	Elementary Student Participation	Junio Inter to Sc Parti
ASIAN	5.7	9.9	10.2	9.4	12.3	1
BLACK	12.1	5.3	5.2	14.8	8.3	
HISPANIC	3.8	1.8	1.7	5.7	3.0	
WHITE	78.3	83.0	82.9	69.9	76.3	7

20/Annual Report on Minority Achievement in Gifted/Talented Programs, MCPS, June 25, 19

21/Figures taken from Statistical Profiles, MCPS 1982-83 and 1985-86.

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Black students are still significantly lower in the gifted and talented programs than their percentage in the total population, but important gains were made, especially at the elementary level. The increase from 5.3% in 1982-83 to 8.3% in 1985-86 offers some encouragement that changes are taking place. The other side of the ledger the increase in Junior High School/Intermediate School participants was not significant. The change was from 5.2 percent in 1982-83 to 6.4 percent in 1985-86. Quite minimal indeed.

As noted, Hispanic student entry into the program, overall has been much slower than all other minority population groups. The MCPS Statistical Profiles states that 5.7 percent of the MCPS population were Hispanic students during 1985-86, and the table above shows that only 3 percent of the elementary students and 2.2 percent of the Junior High School/Intermediate School student participants were Hispanic. Those numbers are distressing to the CMRMC. Immediate and concentrated help should be givem in order to assist that student population in achieving broader participation in the gifted and talented program. They too are talented, and will learn what they are taught, and will achieve just as any other student population if given the appropriate support, encouragement and opportunity. the failure does not rest entirely on their shoulders alone.

In summary, there has been slight improvement as a result of attempts to make the gifted and talented program all-

inclusive rather than exclusionary. The numbers are much better than those from the dismal years of the late 1970's and early 1980's. The CMRMC hopes that the success achieved will be an incentive toward even greater effort ... that the entire school system will lend support to accelerating the rate of change and make the gifted and talented program a model of excellence and fairness. What a remarkable accomplishment that would be.

Loss of Credit

Loss of credit is an issue which was raised by parents who were in consultation with the CMRMC during the 1985-86 school year. This issue is not one which has been a priority matter for the Committee, primarily because the assumption has been that its effect was minuscule, and therefore would be quite insignificant compared to other issues which affect a larger number of students in MCPS.

Parents, through their persistence, more than adequately made the case that loss of credit is a matter which deserves careful study and the findings brought to the attention of the community. They were right, it does affect educational aspirations, progress and the future of hundreds of students. Therefore, the time and resources invested in analysis would be well spent.

Since being given the mandate, the CMRMC made an effort to obtain 1985-86 data and other information from the Superintendent's office, but unfortunately was unable to do so by the deadline for completing this report. Therefore, the numbers which are found in this discussion are school year 1984-85 figures, which should adequately convey the nature and breadth of the issue. The CMRMC will make every effort to obtain more recent figures and will use them to update this discussion.

In response to the CMRMC inquiry, the Superintendent's office wrote that "there is no policy on loss of credit;

enclosed are copies of Resolution No. 30-83, Changes in Loss of Credit Policy..."[22] It was a bit confusing to be told that there is no loss of credit policy, but at the same time to be sent a resolution detailing Changes in Loss of Credit Policy.[23] Those who will read this paper deserve a better explanation than the CMRMC can provide at the present time. The belief is that persons much more knowledgeable about this matter could provide an explanation which would clarify the confusion over whether a policy does or does not exist.

On the substantative issue, Resolution No. 30-83, which was adopted by the Board of Education on January 11, 1983 made the following summary points:

1) Five or more unexcused absences per semester in any course will result in loss of credit for that course. In addition, the loss of credit will be reflected as an E on the student's report card and his/her grade point average.
2) Students who have the written permission of their parents may be evaluated on a credit-no credit basis instead of by standard letter grades in subjects not

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22/Letter from Superintendent Wilmer S. Cody to the CMRMC, June 25, 1986.

23/Resolution No. 30-8, Re: Changes in Loss of Credit Policy, MCPS, January 11, 1983, p. 17.

24/Ibid.

specifically identified as required for graduation by the State Department of Education or Montgomery County Public Schools.

There is of course much more to the resolution, but the portions listed above are the important points for this discussion.

During the 1984-85 school year, 2,807 students sustained 5,293 losses of credit. Slightly above 3 percent of the 92,007 students enrolled in MCPS on March 14, 1985 lost credit. The following table provides a look at the distribution of credit loss over the school population by race, ethnicity and sex.

TABLE XII

MCPS Students Receiving Loss of Credit - School Year 1984-85[24/]

	Number			Percentage
	Male	Female	Total	
Indian	7	4	11	.4
Asian	59	29	88	3.0
Black	404	317	721	26.0
Hispanic	132	77	209	7.5
White	1001	777	1778	63.0

24/These numbers are derived from an information sheet prepared by MCPS entitled, "Number of Students Receiving Loss of Credit by Area, School, Grade, Sex and Race".

In addition to the information provided in the Table, it should be noted that the heaviest loss of credit during 1984-85 occurred in grade 10 affecting 824 students, and grade 11 where 819 students received loss of credit. Grades 12 and 9 with 686 and 478 students sustaining loss of credit respectively, summarizes the loss for that school year.

One important message in the numbers is that again, Hispanic and Black students are disproportionately affected. Although the loss of credit is direct result of action (non-attendance) by students, there are many questions worth asking on this matter and which deserve answers, such as:

1) Why is there such a disproportionately large percentage of Black students (26%) who received loss of credit?
2) Why are Hispanic students the only other racial/ethnic group with loss of credit above their proportion of the school population?
3) What specific efforts are underway to counteract the loss of credit problem in MCPS?
4) How is the wide disparity in loss of credit from one senior high school to another (Gaithersburg 390 students, Einstein 246 students vs Magruder 45, Churchill 61 students) explained?
5) What is the Appeals Policy and Process? Who uses it if it is used at all?

6) Is the loss of credit a factor in expulsions or dropouts? Has the correlation been carefully studied? etc.

The CMRMC does not have the answer to these or a host of other relevant questions on this subject. It is obvious that loss of credit is more of a male student problem than one affecting females, that grades 10 and 11 are the years when the numbers are highest, and that Black students and to a lesser degree Hispanic students are more adversely affected than other students.

This is a subject which needs a lot of light shed on it. The CMRMC will do its best to get answers to all of the questions which are being raised because obviously the loss of credit imposes a serious obstacle to successful completion of the high school education. And, unfortunately, the burden is concentrated on those who by tradition carry such burdens.

Suspended or Excluded?

The 1985-86 student suspension data for MCPS contains both good and bad news. Numbers released in late July 1986 show that 444 fewer students were suspended than during the 1984-85 school year.[25/] This was the second consecutive year a drop in student suspensions occurred, and the third year of decline out of the past four school years.

Furthermore, Black and Hispanic students were well represented in the reduction during 1985-86, unlike the previous school year when the total decline in number of students suspended reached 609. During 1984-85, White students were the principal beneficiaries of the lowered number, not minority students who traditionally bear the heaviest suspension burden.

The reduction in absolute numbers of student suspension is reflected also in the fact that a smaller percentage of each racial group was suspended than in the preceding year. The

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25/Number of students suspended by race and school 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, and 1985-86 school year, MCPS, July 1, 1986.

following numbers show the percentage of reductions by race and ethnicity during the two most recent school years.

TABLE XIII

MCPS Students Suspended by Race[26/]

	Percent of Each Group Enrollment	
	1984-85	1985-86
American Indian	11.7	7.7
Asian	2.5	1.9
Black	14.2	11.5
Hispanic	7.3	6.2
White	5.4	5.0

Now for the bad news. Black students continued to receive a disproportionately large share of the suspensions, just as they did the year before, and before, etc. MCPS has obviously learned some things about managing the behavior of students without causing them to lose instruction time. But from the evidence available, it is reasonable to believe that the successes which have been achieved do not generalize to the Black student population.[27/]

[26/] Ibid.

[27/] Unfortunately, suspension data are not presented by sex.

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Despite the reduction from 950 suspensions in 1984-85 to 783 in 1985-86, Black students still received 29 percent of all suspensions given last year. A proportion clearly out of balance with their 14.8 percent of total enrollment.[28/] The percentage is one point lower than the 30 percent which Black students were of total suspensions during the 1984-85 school year.

In other words, for the second straight year, there has been a significant reduction in the number of suspensions, but imperceptible change in the real burden as it is parceled out to student groups along racial and ethnic lines. The following table provides a graphic display of the lack of progress.

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27/Unfortunately, suspension data are not presented by sex.

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Pupil Enrollment and Suspension[29]
(As Percentage of Totals)

	1985-86 Enrollment	1985-86 Suspension[30]	Enrollment	Suspension[30]
American Indian	0.2	0.35	0.2	0.2
Asian	8.8	3	9.4	3
Black	14.5	3	14.8	29
Hispanic	5.2	5.5	5.7	6
White	71.3	61	69.9	62

Additional bad news can readily be found by identifying the individual schools which are suspending large numbers of students, a large percentage of minority students, and which consistently turn up on the list of "high suspenders." Schools which suspended significant number of students, even when the overall total was down by 444 include the following:

Senior High Schools	No. Suspended 19
Blair	180
Springbrook	145
Gaithersburg	120
Einstein	118
Magruder	108
Seneca Valley	108
Rockville	107

Junior/Intermediate/Middle Schools	
Gaithersburg	126
Ridgeview	122

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[29]The percentage is that portion of all suspensions during the school year.

[30]

Schools which suspended a high percentage of minority students during 1985-86 include the following:

Senior High School	Black Students as Percentage of all Suspendees
Blair	55
Springbrook	50
Kennedy	46
B-CC	41
Einstein	36
Magruder	31
Gaithersburg	30
Junior/Intermediate/Middle Schools	
Westland	53
Lee	50
Julius West	45
Sligo	43

Several of the schools are perennial front runners in suspensions. Some schools have consistently been on the list since the CMRMC came into existence ... and others pre-date the organization by several years. In addition, there are other schools which could be added to these lists, but the point is adequately made that progress in resolving the suspension problem has been limited. Especially fairness and equity, which the CMRMC has asked for over the years, is the ingredient so conspicuous by its absence.

One other matter must be addressed before leaving this subject, and be advised that it is raised with some hesitation and uncertainty. But the frequency with which this concept is

encountered, and often from very reliable sources, makes it impossible to ignore. It is indeed the concept of "exclusion" or the practice of excluding students from class and even school, due to alleged infraction of regulations ... unofficially, sort of.

Exclusion is frequently heard of, but is quite difficult to get a firm hold on --- there but not there. As elusive as it is, the one fact which is no longer in question, at least as far as the CMRMC is concerned, is that it does exist. Exclusion as a behavior management practice is present in some schools.

What is unknown to the CMRMC at this time, despite efforts to learn more are the following questions:

1) When and where did it start?
2) How widespread is the practice?
3) How many students received the "discipline" in 1985-86?
4) How does it work?
5) Is it totally unknown to the BOE and central administration?
6) Why is it only discussed in "hushed tones?"

The CMRMC has been told that the concept has been sold to parents as being advantageous because it does not become a part of the student's record. Which, if true, is about the worst reason of all for justifying this practice.

This is one matter which needs to be subject to thorough fact-finding at the highest level of the school system, if for

no other reason than to put to rest the stories which circulate about the practice. More importantly, making a public record would insure that confidence is maintained in the integrity of information coming from MCPS. Keeping the matter sub rosa will undermine belief in the numbers published as official statistics on MCPS suspensions.

A New Initiative

It is hoped by the CMRMC that at least part of the answer to the persistent problems of equity and fairness in student suspensions may be found the new initiative announced by the Superintendent in January 1986. To undertake the task of looking at the entire subject of suspensions and designing a set of recommendations on how the subject should be dealt with, an Ad Hoc Committee of Staff and Parents was created.

The Committee's work efforts and deliberations resulted in the recommendation of an activity known as The MCPS Suspension Project.[31/] Four areas of concern were identified as needing attention within the scope of the project, and they are summarized as:

1) The circumstances in which disciplinary actions occur
2) Elementary school experience and school histories of students suspended at the secondary school level

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31/ The MCPS Suspension Project, by the MCPS Adhoc Committee on Suspensions, undated.

3) The extent to which school practices and school climate differ in schools with different suspension statistics, and
4) The effectiveness of innovative approaches to improving student behavior and reducing suspensions.

Timeliness, resources and other critical information has been set out by the Committee and was presented to the Superintendent on June 5, 1986. The CMRMC is pleased that a thoughtful and analytical approach to the seemingly insoluble problem of suspensions is underway. Numerous efforts have been attempted in the past with overwhelming success. The sincere hope is that this comprehensive multi-phased effort will succeed where others have failed.

The CMRMC offers the following observations and recommendations for the Ad Hoc Committee and school system's consideration:

1) Recognize that the project as now structured places the responsibility and burden for suspensions almost entirely on the student. Teachers and administrators seem to be absolved of any responsibility as a matter of definition. They also caused suspensions.
2) Plot the incidence or frequency of suspension referrals from individual staff members as part of the data gathering responsibility.
3) Do not avoid the issue of Black male student suspensions in MCPS.

4) Be aggressive and creative in finding ways to utilize parents to prevent suspensions.

5) Bring students into discussions on the meaning of data collected at every opportunity. They have insights which the Committee and other analysts need.

6) Give a full hearing to the practice of exclusions as an element in suspensions.

7) Do not over-promise or make undue claims for outcomes from this effort.

Priority 2 - After Year 3

Nothing has produced more anxiety and anticipation during recent years than the hoped for improvement in minority student school performance. The school system acknowledged that it was educating Black and Hispanic students less well than White and Asian students and made a commitment to enhance learning opportunities and achievements of the former groups. Since September 1983, the school system has been engaged in a concerted effort to design and implement a plan which would reduce the disparity in academic accomplishment between its students.

The Priority 2 statement which embodies the plan speaks of implementing a special emphasis program which will result in substantial gains in the classroom, on standardized and criterion-referenced tests. In addition, the statement promises expanded minority student participation in gifted and talented programs, high level academic achievement courses, and nonathletic extracurricular activities.

As a result of implementing the Minority Student Improvement Plan, there is clearly identifiable progress and success in some instances and none in others. For example, the Annual Report on Minority Achievement in Nonathletic Extra-Curricular Activities, made available on May 21, 1986, shows rather impressive increases in the number and percentage of Black and Hispanic students participating.

TABLE XIV

Nonathletic Extracurricular Activities[32/]

	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Black			
Number Enrolled	9,557	10,202	5,977
Number Participating	953	2,492	2,052
% Participating	10	24	34
Hispanic			
Number Enrolled	3,452	3,678	2,268
Number Participating	188	677	576
% Participating	5	18	25

The changes are quite impressive for the school system. On the other hand, the Annual Report on Minority Achievement in Mathematics, which was also made available in May 1986, shows either no progress (for Black students) or a significant loss as reported by this important indicator (for Hispanic students).

32/Annual Report on Minority Achievement in Nonathletic Extracurricular Activities, MCPS, May 21, 1986, p. 133.

TABLE XV

Enrollment in Grade 9 Higher Level Math Courses[33/]

	1983-84		1984-85		1985-86	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spri
Black						
Number Enrolled	839	839	1,100	1,100	1,100	
Number in Higher Level	263	236	318	310	319	
% in Higher Level	31	28	29	28	29	
Hispanic						
Number Enrolled	309	309	413	413	478	
Number in Higher Level	125	119	170	137	159	
% in Higher Level	40	39	41	33	33	

33/Annual Report on Minority Achievment in Mathematics, MCPS, May 20, 1986, p. 33.

The California Achievement Test results reported as NCE Mean Scores for total reading show a decline for Hispanic students at the third grade, no improvement at grades five and eight, and a one point increase at grade eleven in the fall of 1985. Black students total reading scores were unchanged at the third grade and registered a single point increase in grades five, eight and eleven. As a matter of fact, there was no improvement in any 1985 CAT reading, language or math score for Black students in grade three. And the same mixed results can be seen for Hispanic and Black students from the Maryland Functional Writing and Math Tests.

Attempting to draw hard conclusions on whether Black and Hispanic students are making progress due to the minority student improvement effort, would serve no useful purpose at this point. No one knows whether the effort is succeeding. There is plenty of evidence pointing in both directions. The CMRMC continues to hope that, for the sake of the students, this effort will become a landmark achievement for MCPS.

Designating a Director

Filling the position of Director for Minority Student Improvement may help make this effort successful by bringing a greater sense of direction, focus and accountability to the task. Of course, this designation is only overdue by two or maybe three years. The CMRMC asked for such an appointment as

soon as the initiative was announced in September, 1983. The protracted delay was not a good sign - - for sign watchers.

The delayed appointment does indeed raise as many questions as it answers. For example, was it due to the low priority attached to filling the position, was there difficulty in finding a highly qualified person to fill the job, has the level of authority invested in the job diminished as a result of the delay, etc. It is hoped that the appointment will enhance the chance of success for Priority 2. Only time will tell.

There is one final point which should be made on this subject. First, school year 1986-87 will be critical for determining whether the effort will succeed. After four years, there will be few if any surprises left or questions unanswered. Careful scrutiny and close monitoring throughout the school year will be essential. Next year, we will all know if the best laid plans, etc.

Conclusions

After all of the good news about CAT test scores rising for the sixth straight year, the increased number of minority students taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the higher minority student participation in nonathletic extracurricular activities and higher level math, reduced student suspensions, etc., the question remains ... does the school system provide an equal educational opportunity for all students? Regrettably, the answer to that question is No.

That, by the way, is not only the CMRMC's answer. In survey findings released in January 1986, MCPS acknowledged that non-Asian minority students do not appear to benefit as greatly from the MCPS educational program as their White and Asian peers.[34/] An important admission by any reckoning.

Students gave the same answer in slightly different ways. Black male students believed that teachers graded their school work unfairly.[35/] Hispanic male students did not feel that school staff was willing to help with their personal problems, and least helpful in completing job and college applications.

The CMRMC acknowledges that some efforts have been made to move the system toward greater fairness and equality of opportunity for all students. There are individuals at all

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34/ Survey of Graduating Seniors: Class of 1984, MCPS, January 1986., p. 18.

35/ Ibid., p. A-29.

levels who have worked exceedingly hard to bring about change within the system. There are others, in the view of the CMRMC, who probably liked things the way they were before Brown v. Topeka Board of Education, and still other persons who do not care one way or the other about what happens in this matter of fairness. Those are the impressions conveyed to outside observers.

For all of the differing levels of concern and commitment, serious obstacles remain. These are age old problems which everybody who has half an interest knows about. Montgomery County Public Schools still operate without minority professional staff, or only token minority representation when more than one-third of the students are minorities. Over-representation of minority students in special education and underrepresentation in gifted and talented programs is just the way business has been done historically in MCPS, and probably represents the future as well unless there can be outside intervention to change the system. It surely is not unknown that large proportions of Black students get suspended each year, and if the pushout/dropout rate is ever revealed, that will likely be as egregious as any of these other bad statistics. This is not hearsay. These are the facts. No amount of study of suspended students in the past has changed the pernicious practices, but hope springs eternal.

Although teacher attitudes are an important element in the educational climate in which students live and learn, it

appears to be much easier to ignore that hot potato than to come to grips with it. The BOE's own Minority Afairs Advisory Group was concerned enough to make a recommendation of removal for teachers who were too openly blatant in their expressions of bias.

In the meantime, students are denied opportunities they are entitled to. Some are hurt while trying to function in an educational environment which is less than supportive. For example, it really makes no sense that students encounter antagonism and obstructionism from administrators and teachers due to their interest in planning and staging a Black History Month Program, as happened in a Senior High School early in 1986. It may come as a surprise to some, but students who would take the time to develop such a project are not likely to be the enemy. People who don't understand such a fundamental fact probably have no business in a position of authority which involves students. But they are.

As the CMRMC attempted to put the school year 1985-86 in perspective and look forward to 1986-87, it concluded that the school system is making an effort and some progress toward becoming an "equal opportunity educational system," but it is not there yet. Given all of the facts which can be marshalled, it is impossible to predict when the millenium will arrive. We are still looking for a sign which will tell every interested person that MCPS is an excellent school system for all students.

Acknowledgements

The CMRMC appreciates the broad base of support which it has received since it began its work in 1981. Many parents and students have been instrumental in the gathering of information and helping the Committee to understand the nuances of important issues which arose during the 1985-86 school year.

Always prominent among the organizations which lend support and encouragement to the Committee are Mt. Calvary Baptist Church of Rockville, and the Montgomery County Branch of the NAACP. It would literally be impossible to complete the task of expressing minority (literally and figuratively) opinions aboit the public education system without their support.

Very much appreciated are the teachers, administrators and other staff persons in the MCPS system who understand the frustrations which minority students encounter, and suggest ways by which the CMRMC may approach an issue which may benefit those students.

Even to those who simply convey a word of encouragement or constructive criticism, the Committe is indebted.